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In the Fort Greene section of Brooklyn, a new building is designed to embrace its neighborhood, even in pink. BY MATT YAN [PAGE 8](#)



CLARE HODGES FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

ON LOCATION
AMAGANSETT, N.Y.

How a Couple's 'Happy Place' Got Even Happier

After some well-considered renovation, they have a beach home that's really their own.

By TIM McKEOUGH

As they raised three children in Hoboken, N.J., Joan and Kyle Enger faced all the usual stresses of busy family life, stretched between work and parenting. But one reassuring constant was the knowledge that each summer there would be time to kick back in Amagansett, N.Y.

"We've been coming out east since we met" in 1999, said Ms. Enger, 57, the founder of the interior design firm J. Patryce Design & Company. "Within a month of dating, we were in Amagansett. It's just the most beautiful place."

Over the years, as their children, now 19 to 24, played on the beach, the family occupied various houses. They rented homes with friends for several seasons and owned a house in nearby Springs for a while but ultimately went back to renting in Amagansett.

When the pandemic struck in 2020 and rental prices surged, homeownership began to look more attractive. They managed to find a rental for July, but it cost about \$50,000 for the month.

"I felt like, 'Oh my gosh, this is so much money to spend on just a month of a rental — it's crazy,'" Ms. Enger said.

Surprisingly, as rents took off, they noticed a price cut on a house they had been admiring, which had been on the market for a year. They negotiated the price down further, striking a deal to buy it for \$4.5 million, and closed on it that September.

The shingled 1920s Dutch colonial house was 3,500 square feet, so it offered plenty of space, and it had been updated by the previous owner. Awash in white paint, white marble and white oak, it was pleasant and fresh looking — but a little bland for Ms. Enger,

Joan and Kyle Enger had been vacationing in Amagansett, N.Y., for more than two decades when they bought the 1920s Dutch colonial house, below. "In the back, there's a really generous yard that's lush and beautiful," right, with a pool, Ms. Enger said.



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Center row from left: In the den, Ms. Enger installed linen grasscloth wallcovering and a custom geometric flat-weave rug, with a vintage armchair by Guy Besnard; the house has four bedrooms, and this one, for guests, is painted blue; in the kitchen, Ms. Enger kept the existing cabinets and counters but added new doors, backsplash tile and lighting. Right, By the free-standing bathtub, she installed handmade tile and wood shelving.

who prefers homes with more warmth and personality.

She and Mr. Enger, 59, a real estate developer, knew they would renovate the home to suit their tastes. But before jumping in, they wanted to live there for a while, to get a feel for the place. "If you can wait and live in the house for a bit, you really get a sense of what you want, how you live and how you want the spaces to work," Ms. Enger said.

So they bought the previous owner's sofa, had a mattress delivered and carried in a folding table and chairs to experience the house with bare-bones furniture for a few months.

They were pleased to find there was plenty they liked. "The light is spectacular," Ms. Enger said. "In the back, there's a really generous yard that's lush and beautiful," with a pool, she continued. "And it's a bike ride or walk away from the beach."

By early 2021, she had plans for the renovation and hired Thomas Lavin Contracting to begin work that February.

Where the interior had previously been coated in "white-white" paint, Ms. Enger said, she brought in cream and beige. Throughout the house, she replaced bright-white flat trim with new woodwork that has a subtle decorative profile, painting it a warm gray from Farrow & Ball called



Shaded White.

In the living room, where there was a gas fireplace wrapped in a polished white-marble mantel that seemed a little stiff and formal, they opened up the chimney to convert it back to a wood-burning fireplace, which Ms. Enger surrounded with black honed stone and oak paneling. Beside it, she introduced built-in shelving filled with ceramics and books she has collected over many years, above cane-and-oak doors.

They kept the existing kitchen cabinet frames and counters but replaced the flat door fronts with Shaker-inspired ones that have new hardware, and added new lighting and a tiled backsplash to visually transform the space. In the dining area, which is open to the kitchen and living room, they added nickel-gap paneling, gauzy curtains and a large custom banquette.

Elsewhere, Ms. Enger focused on adding more color, pattern and texture, including a wood-paneled mudroom painted a deep gray-blue, with a terrazzo-tile floor and a built-in bench with tan leather seat. A den received linen grasscloth wallcovering and a custom geometric black-and-off-white flat-weave rug.

The interior work was complete in June 2021, at a cost of about \$250,000. Last summer, the Engers turned their attention to the landscape, with help from Nic Patrick, a landscape architect. They redesigned the parking area with a generous circular gravel driveway, added a bluestone patio and paths, introduced an outdoor kitchen, rebuilt a shed and outdoor shower, and brought in extensive new plantings, including hydrangea, lavender and tall grasses.

"When you look from the pool to the house, I wanted the whole deck to be just covered in flowers," Ms. Enger said. (The cost for that work was an additional \$250,000.)

The couple's primary home is still in Hoboken, but Amagansett is "our happy place," Ms. Enger said. "It's a dream. It really is a wonderful place to just exhale."